

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 090989

EXDIS

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: MOPS, UNSC, LE, IS, XF

SUBJECT: SOUTHERN LEBANON: PROBLEMS OF COORDINATION

1. IT IS BECOMING CLEAR TO US THAT, AS WE ACHIEVE SUCCESS
IN UNIFIL DEPLOYMENT AND IN ENCOURAGING FIRST TENTATIVE
LEBANESE GOVERNMENT PRESENCE IN THE SOUTH, COORDINATION
OF THE VARIOUS ELEMENTS INVOLVED IS BECOMING A CRITICAL
NECESSITY. WE HAVE BEEN DOING OUR UTMOST, FOR EXAMPLE, TO
ENCOURAGE WEAK LEBANESE GOVERNMENT TO TAKE RISKS IN JOINING
UNIFIL IN THE SOUTH. FIRST FRUITS OF THIS EFFORT HAS BEEN
GOL AGREEMENT TO DEPLOY LIMITED NUMBER OF GENDARMES IN
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ADVANCE OF ARMY ELEMENTS WE HOPE THEY PLAN TO COMMIT TO
SOUTHERN LEBANON REGION. LEBANESE GENDARMES, HOWEVER,
HAVE ENCOUNTERED DIFFICULTIES, FIRST WITH IDF AT ABBASIYAH
AND SUBSEQUENTLY WITH IRANIAN CONTINGENT OF UNIFIL (JERU-
SALEM 1011), PRIMARILY BECAUSE OF LACK OF COORDINATION AND
ADVANCE NOTIFICATION OF THEIR ARRIVAL TO DIVERSE UNITS
COEXISTING IN REGION.

2. WITHOUT WISHING TO OVERDRAMATIZE PROBLEMS FACED BY LEBANESE AUTHORITIES IN DEPLOYING MILITARY AND POLICE ELEMENTS IN THE SOUTH, INHIBITIONS OPERATING IN THEIR CALCULATIONS ARE CONSIDERABLE. AMONG OTHER PROBLEMS, THEY

MUST CONTEND WITH THE REAL LEGACY OF CONFESSIONALISM IN FORMING UNITS FOR THIS SENSITIVE DUTY (I.E., PUTTING SHIA MUSLIMS INTO PRIMARILY MUSLIM AREAS). DIFFICULTIES OF THE KIND WHICH THE FIRST GENDARMES HAVE ENCOUNTERED WILL ONLY FEED LEBANESE RELUCTANCE TO COMMIT UNITS TO THE SOUTH AND MAKE IT MUCH MORE DIFFICULT TO ENCOURAGE THE GOL TO TAKE HARD DECISIONS WHICH WILL BE NECESSARY FOR IT TO REASSERT ITS AUTHORITY IN SOUTHERN LEBANON.

3. IT SEEMS TO US THAT FOLLOWING MEASURES MERIT URGENT ATTENTION:

-- FOR BEIRUT: WE UNDERSTAND GOL LIAISON OFFICER STATIONED AT NAQOURA HAS LITTLE AUTHORITY AND, IN ANY CASE, IS FREQUENTLY ABSENT FOR PERSONAL REASONS. WE BELIEVE GOL SHOULD IMMEDIATELY SEND OFFICER IN WHICH IT HAS CONFIDENCE TO NAQOURA ON PERMANENT BASIS. COL. HANI ABBAS, FOR EXAMPLE, WOULD SEEM TO HAVE SEVERAL ADVANTAGES, INCLUDING FACT HE IS SHIITE MUSLIM OF PROMINENT FAMILY, TO RECOMMEND HIM, BUT ESSENTIAL CONSIDERATION IS THAT CONFIDENTIAL

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QUALIFIED GOL REPRESENTATIVE BE ASSIGNED TO CARRY OUT LIAISON FUNCTION ON CONTINUING BASIS. WHAT IS THE POSSIBILITY THAT GOL CAN ALSO BE PERSUADED TO NAME RELIABLE AND LOYAL CIVILIAN OFFICIAL TO REPRESENT SARKIS AND BOUTROS IN SOUTHERN LEBANON?

-- FOR USUN AND JERUSALEM: IT IS STILL OUR FEELING THAT COORDINATION CIRCUIT CAN BEST BE CLOSED IF UN ASSIGNS OFFICIAL WITH POLITICAL EXPERIENCE AND SENSITIVITIES IN BEIRUT, WHERE HE CAN REPORT REGULARLY ON GOL VIEWS AND CONVEY THOSE OF UN. WE KNOW UN CONSIDERING THIS MATTER, BUT BELIEVE USUN SHOULD AGAIN FIND EARLY OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS WITH HIGH SECRETARIAT OFFICIALS THE NEED TO SEND SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE ASAP AND, IN MEANTIME, TO HAVE HIGH-RANKING POLITICAL OR MILITARY FIGURE ASSIGNED IN BEIRUT ON INTERIM BASIS.

-- TEL AVIV'S 4705 MAKES CLEAR THE "ABSOLUTE NECESSITY" OF UNIFIL COORDINATION WITH ISRAELIS.
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